

GENEVA (Suiza) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein on Tuesday said he was deeply disturbed by the death of at least 20 people during clashes between security forces and protestors in Egypt since Friday. He urged Egyptian authorities to take urgent measures to bring an end to the excessive use of force by security personnel.

At least 20 people were killed in the Cairo suburb of Matariya, in Alexandria and in downtown Cairo during protests commemorating the fourth anniversary of the 2011 protests in Egypt that led to the ouster of then-President Hosni Mubarak. Reports indicate that at least 97 people were also injured in Cairo, al-Sharkiya, Monofia, Giza, Minya and Kfarel Sheikh. The death of a leading female activist, Shaimaa Al Sabagh, was captured on video and in photographs posted on the Internet, after she had apparently been shot from behind during a peaceful protest in central Cairo.

“I have in the past urged the Egyptian authorities to take urgent measures to ensure that any excessive use of force* by security personnel is promptly investigated, alleged perpetrators are put on trial and victims have access to justice and compensation,” High Commissioner Zeid said. He added that he strongly supported Egypt’s National Independent Fact Finding Commission’s recommendation to the General Prosecutor to publicly release the results of all investigations.

“Hundreds of people have died during protests against successive governments since January 2011, and there has been very little in the way of accountability,” Zeid said. “The lack of justice for past excesses by security forces simply encourages them to continue on the same path, leading to more deaths and injuries, as we have seen in recent days.”

Dozens of people were also arrested over the weekend. Since the promulgation of a law in November 2013 which places wide restrictions on protests, thousands of people have allegedly been detained for participating in demonstrations.

“All those who have been detained for protesting peacefully must be released,” the High Commissioner stressed. “The long-term stability of Egypt is only possible if fundamental human rights are respected. Otherwise people’s grievances will fester and feelings of injustice will grow, creating fertile ground for further social and political unrest. It is in the interests of all sides to engage in meaningful dialogue and to make efforts to find peaceful solutions to Egypt’s many problems.”

High Commissioner Zeid also condemned the murder of two policemen who were shot at a checkpoint near the Pyramids on Sunday, and the death of a security officer during a clash between protestors and security forces in Matariya on the same day.

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* For the international standards governing law enforcement during demonstrations see: “ Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.”

For more information and media requests, please contact Rupert Colville (+41 22 917 9767 / rcolville@ohchr.org) or Ravina Shamdasani (+41 22 917 9169 / rshamdasani@ohchr.org).

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